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You can make a difference. And when your efforts are linked to other like-minded people who have the inside information and the right kind of organization, you can win.

Join the AFB Information Network and receive up-to-the-minute information on legislation and regulations affecting blind or visually impaired people. Your views can be heard with those of other advocates to make the system work.

Whether it's civil rights or accessible transportation in your home community, the people who win are organized and have the right information. The AFB Information Network can help you with accurate, timely information.

Here's how it works:

Tell us what your interests are and we will respond with periodic alerts on legislative and regulatory issues of importance to *you*. The alert will outline the problem, tell you what advocates are doing about it and suggest ways in which you can be involved.

The alert will be sent via First Class mail and will be available on popular computer information networks including CompuServe™, 4-Sights™, SpecialNet™, and SCAN™, Customary connect time charges apply.

The AFB Information Network is managed by the Governmental Relations Department of the American Foundation for the Blind.

Alan Dinsmore, the Network Coordinator, can answer questions concerning the operation of the network as well as questions on employment, the Randolph-Sheppard program, the Rehabilitation Act, taxation, technology and transportation.

Glenn Plunkett can help you with aging, independent living, long-term care, low vision services, medicare and medicaid, Social Security and SSI.

Scott Marshall, Director of the Governmental Relations Department handles civil rights, education, and all other issues.

Mail to:

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND
1615 M Street, NW Suite 250
Washington, DC 20036

202-457-1495

Join the AFB Information Network

Yes, I want to join

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone ( ) _____

My U.S. House of Representatives member is

_____

I am equipped with a PC/Terminal and modem. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I would like to receive alerts (in standard print via first class mail) in the following areas:

- ☐ aging/long-term care
- ☐ appropriations/budget
- ☐ biomedical research
- ☐ civil rights
- ☐ deaf-blind services
- ☐ education
- ☐ employment
- ☐ housing
- ☐ independent living
- ☐ Javits Wagner O'Day
- ☐ low vision
- ☐ medicare/medicaid
- ☐ personnel preparation
- ☐ postal rates
- ☐ Randolph-Sheppard program
- ☐ rehabilitation
- ☐ Social Security
- ☐ taxation
- ☐ technology
- ☐ transportation
- ☐ voting accessibility

PLEASE LIMIT CHOICES TO FIVE

For future planning purposes: my preferred reading medium is

☐ print ☐ braille ☐ cassette ☐ floppy disk

Join the AFB Information Network

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND
1615 M Street, NW Suite 250
Washington, DC 20036

202-457-1495

"The power of effecting changes for the better is within ourselves, not in the favorableness of circumstances."

Helen Keller
"Rehabilitation"
31 October, 1923

AFB Governmental Relations Department may also be reached by:

Special Net	afb.grd	SCAN	afb
CompuServe	76060, 1500	4-sights	afbgrd

For additional copies of this brochure or assistance in completing the sign-up card, call 1-800-AFBLIND. For other matters or information on alerts, call 202-457-1495.

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Presenting the Governmental Relations Dept.

October 26, 1989

Prepared for

Jerry Dunlap

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FO[illegible] [illegible]ND
15 WEST 16th STR[illegible]
NEW YORK, NY 10011

Governmental Relations Department Staff

Scott Marshall, Director
civil rights, education, and all other issues

Alan Dinsmore, Legislative Network Coordinator
employment, the Randolph-Sheppard program, the Rehabilitation Act, taxation

Glenn Plunkett, Governmental Relations Specialist
aging, independent living, long-term care, low vision services, medicare and medicaid, Social Security and SSI

Barbara LeMoine, Legislative Assistant

Carl Wilson, Executive Secretary

Anna Lopez, Senior Secretary

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I. Empowering People for Positive Change: The Mission of the AFB Governmental Relations Department

Mission

Although advocacy on behalf of blind and visually impaired persons underlies all of the activities of the American Foundation for the Blind, the principle mission of the Governmental Relations Department (GRD) is to improve the independence and dignity of blind people, by facilitating the enactment and effective implementation of public laws which benefit blind and visually impaired persons. Since 1948, the Governmental Relations Department has promoted the sharing of information between government policymakers and those having expertise on issues affecting blind and visually impaired people. The purpose of this exchange of information is to assist in the development of sound public policies with respect to federal and state programs affecting education and rehabilitation of blind persons, as well as laws which impact upon the economic status and civil rights of such individuals. The GRD also keeps professionals, consumers, and advocates informed about government's responses to the needs of persons with sight loss, and works closely with other organizations in the disability community on issues of mutual concern.

Services

In keeping with its mission, the GRD is the principle liaison between the Foundation's family of services and the federal government. Upon request, the GRD prepares testimony to be delivered before Congressional committees and is often called upon to provide informal comment concerning pending or proposed legislation. In addition, as a result of the great reservoir of knowledge and expertise available through the Foundation's other programs and services, the GRD also prepares written comments on proposed regulations for submission to Executive Branch agencies, and is frequently asked to recommend qualified, knowledgeable persons to sit on Agency advisory committees or task forces. The information provided by the GRD is carefully compiled from the agency's own resources or is obtained from reliable outside sources.

The GRD also monitors and disseminates information from the Congressional Record and the Federal Register. Such information helps professionals, consumers, and their advocates to stay abreast of legislative and regulatory developments. The AFB Information Network was inaugurated in February 1989 and is an electronically-based, demand-responsive grassroots information system. Staff of the GRD are frequently invited to speak at national conferences concerning the development of public policies affecting blind persons, and have also provided training to professionals, consumers, and advocates relative to the lawmaking and regulatory process. Such activities enhance the ability of professionals, consumers, parents, and other interested persons to act as self-advocates.

The Governmental Relations Department has had one professional staff vacancy since November 1988. This vacancy has not been filled due to the personnel freeze in effect agency wide. This is indeed unfortunate inasmuch as AFB's ability to adequately represent the blindness community in Washington is directly proportional to the number of blindness advocates on the Hill. AFB is the only organization in the blindness community which has a full-time governmental relations staff, focusing on a broad range of blindness-related issues.

II. Putting Programmatic Knowledge and Political Know-How to Work in Washington: How the Governmental Relations Department and the Program Services Unit Collaborate to Benefit Blind or Visually Impaired People

Introduction

Close cooperation between GRD and New York staff is vital to our success in Washington. Whether it is developing recommendations for improvements to the Education of the Handicapped Act or testifying regarding the need for a post-1990 disability census survey, the Governmental Relations Department relies heavily upon the expertise of AFB's programmatic staff. This close collaborative relationship greatly benefits members of Congress and their staffs who rely upon the American Foundation for the Blind for timely, accurate information on blindness issues. By the sam token, programmatic staff relies upon the political judgment and advocacy skills of the GRD staff.

This section contains excerpts from testimony prepared jointly by GRD and programmatic staff. In keeping with the fast pace on Capitol Hill, GRD staff sometimes in asked to respond to proposed legislation or to submit testimony on very short notice, which makes a close relationship with programmatic staff even more critical. Armed with accurate information, AFB's Governmental Relations Department is relied upon as the primary source of information on blindness issues in Washington.

EXCERPTED FROM

Testimony
of
The American Foundation for the Blind

by

Scott Marshall, Director
Governmental Relations Department

Before the Subcommittee on Select Education
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
101st Congress, first session
April 4, 1989

---

regarding
Reauthorization of the Education of the Handicapped Act

For further information contact:

Governmental Relations Department:
Scott Marshall, Director, 202-457-1498

Program Services Department:
Susan Spungin, Ph.D.,
Assoc. Exec Dir., 212-620-2031
Kathleen Huebner, Ph.D.,
Dir., National Services in Education, 212-620-2045
Alana Zambone, Ph.D.,
National Consultant in Multi-Disabilities
and Early Childhood, 212-620-2047

Part D, Sec 631: Training Personnel for Education of the Handicapped

There is a serious shortage of teachers specifically qualified in the education of visually-handicapped children. In order to meet this critical need, we recommend that Sec. 631 should be amended to strengthen the Secretary's authority to support specialized training of personnel in the child's specific disability area, e.g., education of the visually-handicapped. A similar amendment to Sec. 641: Research and Demonstration Projects in Education of Handicapped Children is also recommended. Unfortunately, blind or visually-impaired children are often currently served by teachers who are professionally qualified in another disability area. Such teachers, although well-meaning, lack specific knowledge in such areas as braille and other communications skills which are vital to an appropriate education of a blind or visually-impaired child.

In addition, although the current language of Sec. 631 does contemplate support of training for regular educators, we feel that a serious problem exists with respect to the training of regular educators who sometimes fail to appreciate their vital role in the education of a blind or otherwise disabled child. Accordingly, we have recommended additional language in Section 631(b) authorizing the Secretary's support for preservice and inservice training designed to address this problem.

Part G, Sec. 652: Captioned Films and Education Media for Handicapped Persons

Video description service enables blind or visually-impaired persons to more fully benefit from television or cinema by providing an audio description of action and other information normally presented visually on a screen. Like captioning for deaf or hearing-impaired persons, video description is designed to provide the missing information which is necessary for full enjoyment and benefit from the television or film media. Accordingly, we have recommended an amendment to Section 652 similar to the current authorization for captioning services. Such an amendment will help to secure continual appropriations for video description service similar to the funding status of captioning for deaf persons.

Part H, Handicapped Infants and Toddlers, Sec. 672: Definitions

Young infants and children before the age of five cannot be appropriately tested for vision loss using standard visual acuity measuring techniques (such as an ordinary eye chart). Thus, unless functional vision indicators (such as observations of visual tracking, responses to visual stimulation while at play, etc.) are utilized, vision loss in infants and young children may be overlooked at the most critical time of a child's visual development.

Accordingly, we have recommended amendments to Sec. 672 to include functional vision indicators as part of the assessment for service eligibility under Part H of the EHA. In addition, other suggested amendments to Section 672 are recommended to make it clear that vision assessment and therapy and orientation and mobility are to be included as part of early intervention services, and that such services must be provided by qualified personnel.

Thank you for this opportunity to present some of the major issues which we believe the Subcommittee should consider during the EHA reauthorization process. Please be assured that the AFB's expert programmatic staff will be ready to furnish you with any additional information you might require. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

EXCERPTED FROM

Testimony

of

The American Foundation for the Blind

by

Scott Marshall, Director
Governmental Relations Department
American Foundation for the Blind

Before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
101st Congress, First Session

April 4, 1989

---

regarding

Bureau of the Census, FY1990 Appropriations
Funding for Development and Pretesting of a Post-1990 Decennial Disability Survey

For further information contact:

Scott Marshall, Director
Governmental Relations Department, 202-457-1498
Corinne Kirchner, Ph.D. Director
Social Research Department, 212-620-2140

Good morning Mr. Chairman:

My name is Scott Marshall, and I am the Director of the Governmental Relations Department of the American Foundation for the Blind. The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), founded in 1921, is a national, voluntary research and consulting organization in the field of blindness and visual impairment. As part of its many activities benefitting blind and visually impaired persons, the AFB conducts and disseminates social research on blindness and visual impairment, and maintains one of the world's largest libraries of literature on the nonmedical aspects of blindness.

We are frequently asked by both the public and private sectors to provide demographic data on blindness and visual impairment in the U.In responding to these inquiries, we are acutely aware of the current inadequacies of existing data resources on disability, and the need for better demographic data on disability in the U.S. Accordingly, we ask this Subcommittee to earmark the sum of $200 thousand for the purpose of designing and initial testing of a post 1990 follow on disability survey.

Overview

Both the public and private sectors need national and state-level data on persons with disabilities. The policy needs have mushroomed since the 1970s when the opportunity was recognized to build upon disability items in the 1980 Census as a sampling frame.

Extensive work was done toward a Post-census Disability Survey, including a large pretest. But the opportunity was lost when some federal agencies that were expected to use, and fund, the data could not pay their share. The high investment made a decade ago can be partly recouped now by a Post 1990 Census Disability Survey.

Why is the 1990 Census Not Enough?

The 1990 census "long form" (for a large sample) will include three items on disability (for ages 15 years and older): 1) whether a person is limited in, or unable to, work; 2) whether a person is limited in mobility, and 3) whether a person is limited in self-care.

III. Grassroots Advocacy in the Electronic Age: Informing the Blindness Community Through the AFB Information Network (AFBIN)

Introduction

The AFB Information Network is an electronically-based grassroots information system which provides timely information to the blindness community concerning public policy issues affecting blind or visually impaired persons. The AFBIN system is unique in that it is demand-responsive, i.e., the system provides alerts to participants based on their selected issue preferences. Alerts are also provided on cassette tape for those persons preferring that medium. A copy of the AFBIN enrollment brochure is enclosed.

This section contains a sample AFBIN legislative alert, a letterwriting guide, a how-to piece called "Tell It to Washington: Effective Communications with Public Officials." In addition, the steps involved in generating a legislative alert from conception to follow-up are presented.

This alert is a service of the AFB Information Network, American Foundation for the Blind, Governmental Relations Department, 1615 M Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

AFBIN Legislative Alerts are available on cassette tape upon request and are available electronically through CompuServe and other computer information systems.

Legislative Alert *Action Required!*

August 18, 1989

Funding for Video Description Services

Action Required: Contact your own U.S. senators and members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations (particularly the senators marked with an asterisk on the attached list) to urge support for $1 million in funding for video description services, which make television and other visual media accessible to blind or visually impaired persons. Senators are probably in their home states during this Congressional recess period, and accordingly, it is a good time to reach them. Check your local phone directory under U.S. Government listings for the telephone numbers and locations of local senatorial offices. The Senate will reconvene in Washington on September 6. After September 6, you may reach senatorial offices in Washington at the telephone number and address listed at the end of this alert.

Background

What are video description services? Video description services make television and other visual media more accessible to blind persons by providing a narrated description of the key visual elements of television programs, VCR, motion picture or theater productions. The narration, which occurs only during pauses in the ordinary dialogue, describes actions, settings, scene changes, costumes, and body language. In the case of television, video descriptions are broadcast on a Separate Audio Channel which can be received through any stereo television or VCR. No special decoder is required, Within three years, the electronics industry predicts that all televisions sold in the U.S. will be stereo equipped, and thus will be able to receive the SAP channel. Older television receivers can be adapted to stereo for about $100 using a device available from retailers such as Radio Shack.

Video description services for the television medium have been developed and tested principally by the WGBH Educational Foundation, and a free Descriptive Video Services™ is ready for distribution nationally to stations which are part of the Public Broadcasting System. WGBH Television, located in Boston, MA, pioneered captioning for deaf persons in the early 1970's, and has produced outstanding public television programming such as "Nova," " Mystery," and the"American Playhouse" series. Other organizations and individuals have utilized video description techniques (sometimes called audio description) in the expanded areas of VCR, motion pictures, and live theater presentations.

What is the current funding status of video description services? The Federal government currently provides a base of support for captioning and for other national access and educational services for hearing and visually impaired persons. These activities are authorized under the Education of the Handicapped Act. As a new activity, video description services will require *new funds*. A modest federal appropriation for video description services, which is supported by organizations of and for the blind, is greatly needed. If Congress funds video description services, WGBH or other grantees would be able to apply for funding to the Department of Education which already administers funding for captioning and other educational activities

for the handicapped. WGBH estimates that funding in the sum of $1 million would enable it to provide from 3 to 5 hours of described programming each week, and would further permit leveraging of funds with private donors.

A Senate appropriations subcommittee is expected to consider funding for activities such as video description services on or about September 6. The Appropriations bill as reported by the House Appropriations Committee *does not* contain funds for video description services.

What you can do: Advocates for video description services urge you to contact your own U.S. Senators to urge their support for video description services to be included in the FY1990 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. In addition to contacting your two U.S. Senators about this matter, you should also contact members of the Senate Appropriations Committee (particularly those members who are marked with an asterisk on the attached list). You may reach senators at home during this Congressional recess period, or you may contact them in Washington after September 6 at the following address and telephone number: The Hon. ----, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510; phone (202) 224-3121.

Your message is simple: Urge $1 million in funding for video description services to be included in the FY1990 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill.

For tips on effective letterwriting and communicating with senators, see the document "Tell It to Washington: Effective Communication with Public Officials" or the attached issue-specific letterwriting guide. If you have questions about this matter, you may contact Scott Marshall at (202) 457-1498.

Issue Specific Letter-Writing Guide: Appropriation for Video Description Services

Contents of Letter

This is suggested language. DO NOT USE VERBATIM.

I. Indicate who you are and the purpose or nature of your request. If you are a voter in the member's district or state, mention this fact in your letter. "As a blind or visually impaired person" or "As a professional working in the field of services for blind or visually impaired persons...

II. State specifically what you want your member to do about your problem or request. "I am writing to you to urge funding for video description services under the Education of the Handicapped Act. As you may know, video description services makes television and other visual media accessible to blind or visually impaired people by providing an audio description of information presented on the screen. Video description, which is presented during pauses in the regular dialogue, provides information about actions, settings, scene changes, costumes, and body language. In the case of television, the audio description is received on the Separate Audio Program channel of a stereo TV or VCR, and no special decoder device is required."

III. Indicate why it is important to you for your member to take action regarding your problem or request. "Video description service is extremely valuable to me, and I feel that for the first time, I will be able to fully benefit from television programming (or I am confident that my blind or visually impaired clients would greatly benefit from video description services not only for its entertainment value, but also as a means of learning the meaning of body language.) Please include funding for this new service when you appropriate funds for the Education of the Handicapped Act. A modest appropriation from the federal government now will help launch this service on public television and further expansion of these services into motion pictures, home video, and live theater performances.

"If you have any questions about the value of this service to blind or visually impaired people, please do not hesitate to contact me."

IV. Put a "hook" in your letter. Ask for something which will require a substantive reply to your letter or communication. For example, ask your member to advise you as to the status of this matter before the Appropriations Committee.

V. Indicate your thanks, reiterate your most important message, and say that you expect a response. "Thank you for considering my views with regard to... I look forward to hearing from you."

For further information about communicating effectively with public officials, read our handout entitled "Tell It To Washington: Effective Communications with Public Officials."

Tell It to Washington: Effective Communications with Public Officials

Forms of Address

The Hon. George Bush
The White House
Washington, DC 20500;

Dear Mr. President:

Hon. (insert name) U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510	Hon. (insert name) U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515
Dear Senator _____:	Dear Representative _____:

Use the person's first name in the salutation of your letter only if you know him/her personally.

To find out the names of your Senators and Representatives contact your local public library or call AFB Governmental Relations Department at 202-457-1495.

Letter-writing Tips

Make your letter short (preferably two or three paragraphs), to the point, and personal. Stick to one issue per letter. Handwritten letters in your own words are best followed by typewritten correspondence. Postcards, petitions, or "canned" computer generated messages are less effective.

Braille letters are fine if accompanied by a print transcription of the letter. Members of Congress can answer your letter in braille upon request, but this will delay their response to you.

Telegrams, Mailgrams, FAX Messages, Phone Calls

Use telegrams, mailgrams, fax, or phone calls if time is of the essence, e.g., shortly before a committee or floor vote. Western Union has a reduced rate Political Opinion Message (POM) telegram with same day delivery or a mailgram with second day delivery. Each office can provide you with a fax number. First-class letters may take from seven to ten days for delivery.

Members' offices can be reached through the Capitol switchboard at (202) 225-3121 or may be contacted through their local offices. Check your public library or your phone directory under U.S. Government for local numbers. You may call the public opinion office at the White House at 202-456-7639. Always jot down the name of the staff person with whom you speak for future reference.

How to Obtain Copies of Bills

Ask your own member of Congress since this is an excellent way to become acquainted with his/her office. Alternatively, send a self-addressed mailing label (no postage required) to either the House Legislative Documents Room, Capitol H106, Washington DC 20515 or to the Senate Legislative Documents Room, S.H.O.B. Room B04, Washington, DC 20510. Specify the number of the bill, report, or resolution you want. Recorded or computer diskette copies of certain bills may be available through the AFB Governmental Relations Department.

Contents of Your Message

Use this generic outline or use one of AFB'S issue-specific letter-writing guides.

I. Indicate who you are and the purpose or nature of your problem or request. If you are a voter in the member's district or state, mention this fact in your letter.

II. State specifically what you want your member to do about your problem or request.

III. Indicate why it is important to you for your member to take action regarding your problem or request.

IV. Put a "hook" in your letter. Ask for something which will require a substantive reply to your letter or communication. For example, ask your member to advise you as to the status of the pending legislation. Is your member a cosponsor of the bill in question?

V. Indicate your thanks, reiterate your most important message, and say that you expect a response.

Don't Be Discouraged!!!!!

You may not always receive a substantive response to your letters or communications, but following these suggestions will increase the chances that you will be heard effectively in Washington. However, each letter received by a member of Congress is counted. Remember that the legislative process involves many stages and many key votes before a bill is passed by both the House and the Senate and sent to the President for signature. Accordingly, you may be asked to write several letters or to make several phone calls on a single issue.

AFBIN Mailing Checklist

PLANNING

____ Team Meeting to Discuss Logistics and Preparation of Checklist ____ Discussed Concept with WFG

Subject of Alert _____ Target Mailing Date _____ Author _____

Recipients

__ all members
__ aging/long-term care
__ appropriations/budget
__ biomedical research
__ civil rights
__ deaf-blind services
__ education
__ employment
__ housing
__ independent living
__ Javits Wagner O'Day
__ low vision
__ medicare/medicaid
__ personnel preparation
__ postal rates
__ Randolph-Sheppard program
__ rehabilitation
__ Social Security
__ taxation
__ technology
__ transportation
__ voting accessibility

Contents of Mailing ___ Alert ___ Update ___ Letterwriting Guide
___ Attachment #1 _____ ___ Attachment #2 _____

PRODUCTION

Text Rec'd _____ Text Keyboarded _____ Proofed _____ Corrected Text Reviewed _____

Letterwriting Guide Prepared _____ Proofed _____ Corrected Text Reviewed _____

Attachment(s) Prepared _____ Proofed _____ Corrected Text Reviewed _____

Labels Produced _____ Medium (#) _____ Print _____ Cassette _____ Braille _____ Disk

ASCII Text File_____ Script _____ Checked by Alan Dinsmore _____

DISTRIBUTION

Recorded _____ Duplicated _____ Mailed _____ (*Free matter cannot be mailed with print*)

Uploaded CompuServe _____ 4-Sights _____ Other _____

Print _____ Number of Pieces (Alert/Update + attachments) _____ Quantity of Each Needed

Sent to Printer _____ Returned by Printer _____ Produced in House _____

Checked by Alan Dinsmore _____

Mailing Collated, Stuffed, Stamped _____ Alert/Update _____ Letterwriting Guide
_____ Attachment#1 _____ Attachment #2

Priority List _____ Cassette to WFG _____ Notified Betty Calder _____

Alert/Update Mailed _____ Final Sign-off by Alan Dinsmore _____

FOLLOW-UP

____ Follow-Up Phone Calls Made ___ Random ___ Targeted to _____

Notes Regarding Follow-Up:

General Notes Regarding Alert or Production Schedule

IV. On Capitol Hill: How AFB Interacts With Congress and Executive Branch Agencies to Insure That the Blindness Perspective Will Be Heard

Introduction

AFB's Governmental Relations Department aggressively represents the interests of blind or visually impaired persons before Congress and the Executive Branch agencies. In addition, we advocate from the blindness perspective in coalition with other disability organizations as appropriate. This section contains a copy of a letter recently sent by William F. Gallagher to all 440 members of the House of Representatives; a sample of testimony presented before a Congressional Committee, and samples of draft statutory and report language prepared for a Congressional Committee by AFB Governmental Relations Department staff. AFB's testimony is attractively produced using the latest desk top publishing techniques. Braille or large print copies are also provided, as needed, when a blind or visually impaired person orally presents our testimony.

GRD consults regularly with Congressional staff both in person and via telephone, and are even reachable via beeper.

American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.
Governmental Relations Department
1615 M Street, N.W. Suite 250 Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 457-1487

October 10, 1989

Hon. Bill Green
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: H.R. 2273, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1989

Dear Rep. Green:

The American Foundation for the Blind is a national nonprofit organization whose primary mission is to ensure the development, maintenance and constant improvement of services for blind and visually impaired people in the United States.

Recognized as Helen Keller's cause in the United States, AFB works in partnership with more than 1,000 specialized agencies, schools and organizations of and for blind people.

Your support of the Americans with Disabilities Act, without weakening amendments, will assure blind and visually impaired people of the protections of equal opportunity in important areas of employment and public accommodations. These protections are not now found in Sec. 504 or in state laws.

We also ask your support in bringing this most important piece of legislation to the floor for an early vote.

Sincerely,

William F. Gallagher
Executive Director

WFG/bjl

EXCERPTED FROM

Testimony

of

The American Foundation for the Blind

by

Scott Marshall, Director
Governmental Relations Department

Before the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

101st Congress, First Session
May 4, 1989

regarding

FY1990 Appropriations for Programs within the Subcommittee's Jurisdiction

For further information contact:
American Foundation for the Blind
Governmental Relations Department
1615 M Street, N.W. Suite 250
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 457-1498

Special Education Personnel Development

FY1988 Appropriation	FY1989 Appropriation	FY1990 Authorization	President's FY1990 Request	AFB FY1990 Recommendation
66.75	67.1	pending	flexible freeze	95. 0

This funding level would return this program to the level authorized prior to the authorization reductions of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (P.L. 97-35). We are seriously concerned about the shortage of teachers who are trained to deal with the unique needs of blind and visually-impaired children. Congress needs to fund these programs at the recommended level to insure an adequate supply of qualified personnel who can instruct blind children in such skills as orientation and mobility and the use of braille.

Special Education Technology

FY1988 Appropriation	FY1989 Appropriation	FY1990 Authorization	President's FY1990 Request	AFB FY1990 Recommendation
4.69	4.73	11.025	flexible freeze	11.025

Access to adaptive technology, such as talking computer terminals, has a significant impact on appropriate education for children who are blind or visually-impaired. Accordingly, Congress should fund part G as recommended to assist in the development and availability of new technologies.

State Operated Programs (P.L. 89-313)

FY1988 Appropriation	FY1989 Appropriation	FY1990 Authorization	President's FY1990 Request	AFB Recommendation
151.26	148.2	formula	flexible freeze	170.0

AFB believes that state-operated and state-supported schools for blind children are an important part of the continuum of placement options for blind and visually-impaired children, especially those who are multi-handicapped.

Current Law	Changes in Current Law [additions] {deletions}	Rationale
REAUTHORIZATION OF THE EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED ACT Section 626(f) "The Secretary, as appropriate, shall coordinate programs described under Subsection (a) with projects developed under Section 311 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.	Section 626(f) "The Secretary, as appropriate, shall coordinate programs described under Subsection (a) with projects developed under Section 311 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. ["The Secretary shall fund one or more demonstration models designed to establish appropriate methods of providing, or continuing to provide, assistive technology devices and services to secondary school students as they transition to vocational rehabilitation, employment, post-secondary education, or adult services. Such demonstration models shall include, as appropriate (1) cooperative agreements with the Rehabilitation Services Administration and/or state vocational rehabilitation agencies which insure continuity of funding for assistive technology devices and services to such students. (2) methods for dissemination of exemplary practices which can be adapted or adopted by transitional programs for handicapped secondary school students. Report language: The Committee is concerned that handicapped students often lose access to assistive technology devices and services when they transition from secondary school to the vocational rehabilitation or other service delivery systems. To address this problem, the Secretary is authorized to fund one or more demonstration models designed to insure	

SAMPLE DRAFT REPORT LANGUAGE

June 14, 1989

Patricia Laird
Subcommittee on Select Education
House Annex #1, Room 517
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Pat,

As promised, below please find language regarding an appropriation request for video description service which you may wish to include in your subcommittee's memorandum to Chairman Natcher regarding appropriations under the Education of the Handicapped Act for FY1990. I am also sending a copy of this letter to Pat Morrissey of your subcommittee's minority staff with a request that a letter concerning this appropriations request be also sent to Chairman Natcher on behalf of Republican members on your subcommittee. If you have any questions about this matter, please let me know.

The Subcommittee requests an additional $1.3 million to be included in the Captioned Films and Educational Media for Handicapped Persons account (authorized by Sec. 652 of the Education of the Handicapped Act) for the purpose of providing video description services to blind or visually impaired persons. Section 652 of the Education of the Handicapped Act authorizes the Secretary of Education to fund by grant or contract the production and distribution of educational media for the handicapped. Video Description Service,which has been developed principally by the WGBH Educational Foundation, makes educational television accessible to blind or visually impaired persons by providing descriptions of the key visual elements of a television program and broadcasting such information on the Separate Audio Program (SAP) channel, a standard feature of stereo television technology. No separate decoder is required. Video Description Service provides the same service for blind or visually impaired persons as closed captioning does for hearing impaired persons, that is, it uses technology to provide access to television programs. For eighteen consecutive years the Congress and the Department of Education have cooperated to provide by grant or contract funds to partially support the essential activities related to providing closed captions. As a new service, Descriptive Video Service deserves similar support, to ensure a regular, permanent service that provides at least 3-5 hours of described programs per week and to insure rapid expansion of the service beyond educational television into commercial, cable, and home video. The provision of Video Description Service to blind or visually impaired persons provides the opportunity for complete access to television programs and other video materials, which is consistent with a national goal of providing equal access to all aspects of society for our citizens with disabilities, and which should be assisted through Federal funding. The Subcommittee is considering the possibility of changing the current authorization for video description service to include a specific authorization to appropriate funds to the WGBH Educational Foundation which is the only entity currently able to provide video description service for educational television on a national basis. Since such legislation may not be enacted into law by the end of the current fiscal year, the Subcommittee requests an appropriation of $1.3 million for video description service as part of the discretionary program authorized by Sec. 652 of the Education of the Handicapped Act.

V. Have We Made a Difference: Accomplishments Since January 1, 1989

Legislative Accomplishments Since January 1, 1989

- Amendment of Sections 652 and 653 of the Education of the Handicapped Act to permit funding for video description services, which make television, motion pictures, and other visual arts more accessible to blind or visually impaired persons.[1]

- Appropriation of $1 million for video description services to be distributed by the Department of Education during FY1990 on a competitive grant basis.[2]

- Introduction of the Americans with Disabilities Act (S. 933 and H.R.2273) which greatly expands civil rights protections accorded to blind and other disabled persons. Of particular interest to blind or visually impaired persons are provisions relating to employment discrimination and public accommodations. AFB lead both the blindness and deafness communities in successfully opposing certain amendments which, if passed, would have severely limited the benefits to be provided to blind and other sensory-impaired persons under the Act. Passage of the ADA is hoped for this year.

- Successfully spearheaded an amendment to Social Security legislation (H.R.8) which exempted blind persons from provisions which, if left unchallenged, would have resulted in significant loss of income by blind Social Security Disability Insurance beneficiaries. Congressional members and their staffs rely primarily upon the AFB Governmental Relations Department for its unique expertise in this highly complex area of the law.

- Successfully obtained initial funding for the development of a post-1990 disability census survey, which is the first step toward securing vitally needed demographic data on blindness and other disabilities. AFB founded and coordinates the Coalition on Demographics and Disability which works on this issue.[3]

- Drafted and secured amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act which authorizes the Secretary of Education to examine problems associated with the acquisition and maintenance of technology as a student moves between the education and rehabilitation systems. This is particularly significant to blind or visually impaired students who learn how to use equipment such as talking computer terminals in junior high school, but who loose access to such equipment upon graduation from high school.[4]

- In cooperation with the National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness, secured amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act which restore the separate funding status of services to deaf-blind children. Under prior law,funds for deaf-blind children could be used to provide services

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[1] Included in draft bills soon to be considered by House and Senate Committees. Adoption anticipated.

[2] Although the appropriations bill was vetoed by the President because of the inclusion of abortion funding, we expect that funding for video description will remain intact.

[3] The bill awaits the President's signature.

[4] Included in draft bills soon to be considered by House and Senate Committees.

to other handicapped children, thereby greatly diminishing the impact of deaf-blind service funds. Programs which primarily serve other handicapped children lack the expertise to provide the intensity and frequency of services needed by deaf-blind children.[5]

- Successfully obtained over 100 percent increase in funding for the Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act. AFB GRD drafted new language, which if adopted, will insure that part of the increased funding will be used to finance a study regarding barriers to the acquisition of needed technologies. This is important to blind or visually impaired persons because of the lack of funding alternatives for such equipment.

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[5] Included in draft bills soon to be considered by House and Senate Committees.

VI. After the Gavel Falls: AFB's Role After Legislation Is Passed

Introduction

The Governmental Relations Department is also active in providing AFB's views on regulations implementing programs of significance to blind or visually impaired persons. In addition, the GRD staff has provided intensive advocacy training to members of the National Association of Parents of the Visually Impaired, and is frequently asked to present or facilitate legislative briefings for organizations such as the Affiliated Leadership League of and for the Blind, the National Council of Private Agencies for the Blind and the American Council of the Blind.

This section contains a sample letter providing comment on Social Security regulations as well as the agenda prepared for the seminar for the National Association of Parents of the Visually Impaired.

American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.
Governmental Relations Department
1615 M Street, N.W. Suite 250 Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 457-1487

September 15, 1989

Commissioner of Social Security
Dept. of Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 1585
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Commissioner:

This is in reference to the notice of proposed rulemaking 54 FR 30907 dated July 25, 1989 concerning substantial gainful activity earnings levels. These comments are on behalf of the American Foundation for the Blind.

The American Foundation for the Blind is a national nonprofit organization whose primary mission is to ensure the development, maintenance and constant improvement of services for blind and visually impaired people in the United States. Recognized as Helen Keller's cause in the United States, AFB works in partnership with more than 1,000 specialized agencies, schools and organizations of and for blind people.

We support the proposal to increase the substantial gainful activity (SGA) earnings level, and the number of hours worked by self-employed, for individuals who are disabled (by conditions other than blindness) under the Social Security Act but the proposed amount is too small. As a minimum first step, the SGA amount should be increased to SGA earnings level for those who are blind, and indexed in the same manner. As a second step, the earnings limitation for those found to be disabled and blind under the Social Security Act should be eliminated entirely as proposed for those age 65-69. For those who can meet the medical and functional determinations of disability and blindness, social security benefits should be considered a subsidy for those lucky enough to find employment and work despite their disabling condition--that would be an incentive to work!

Sincerely,

Glenn M. Plunkett
Governmental Relations Specialist

GP/bjl

National Association for Parents of the Visually Impaired

Legislative Seminar

conducted by

The American Foundation for the Blind
Governmental Relations Department

Agenda

American Foundation for the Blind
Governmental Relations Department

Scott Marshall, Director
Alan Dinsmore, Legislative Network Coordinator
Glenn Plunkett, Governmental Relations Specialist

Guests

Kathleen Megivern, Executive Director, AER
Liz Savage, Assistant Director, Government Affairs Department, Epilepsy Foundation

Monday, March 6, 1989

9:00	Welcome, introductions of participants and AFB staff, discussion of expectations: overview of the seminar; icebreaker
10:00	Legislative Gobbledygook or "In Case We Don't Speak English, Do This!" **Alan Dinsmore**
10:30	Coffee break
10:45	"Murder Holes" and the Lawmaking Process: Where and How You Can Lose **Scott Marshall**
11:15	Substantive issue briefing No. #1: Teacher Shortages **Kathleen Megivern**
11:45	Morning wrap-up
12:00	Lunch on your own (see list of neighborhood restaurants in packet)
1:30	Substantive issue briefing No. #2: Least Restrictive Environment **Scott Marshall**
2:00	Substantive issue briefing No. #3: Priority Funding for Assistive Technology **Alan Dinsmore**

2:30 Coffee break

2:45 Substantive issue briefing No. #4: Service Delivery to Specific Populations **Scott Marshall**

3:15 Afternoon wrap-up

3:45 Adjournment for the day

Tuesday, March 7, 1989

10:00 Guest speaker: "How Coalition Politics Works--and Sometimes Doesn't" **Liz Savage**

10:30 Empowering Parents for Positive Change: Your Role in the Public Policy Process **Liz Savage and Scott Marshall**

11:00 Coffee break

11:15 What Lobbyists Do and How They Do It

11:45 Morning wrap-up

12:00 Lunch on your own

1:30 The Encounter: How to Talk (but more importantly how to listen) to a Hill Staffer or Member of Congress **Glenn Plunkett and Alan Dinsmore**

2:15 Refresher on issues; appropriate use of "talking points" sheets; what other people are saying on the Hill

2:45 Review of logistics for Hill visits

3:00 Adjournment for the day

Wednesday, March 8, 1989 (Capitol Hill)

9:30 Convene in Rayburn cafeteria for final briefing before visits (No smoking section by the windows)

10:00 First visits to members of Congress (teams of two participants for each visit are recommended)

1:00 Reconvene at Rayburn cafeteria for lunch and consultation with AFB staff (No smoking section by the windows)

2:00 Afternoon visits with members of Congress and their staffs

4:00 Adjournment for the day

Thursday, March 9:

10:00	Critique of Hill experience; discussion of need for follow-up; report back from visits
11:00	Coffee break
11:15	Review of parent handbook materials
12:00	Lunch on your own
1:30	Complete review on handbook materials; make writing assignments for new sections, if necessary
3:00	GRD PCs (WordPerfect 5.0) will be available for writing and editing purposes. Secretarial assistance will be available through 6:00 PM if required.

Friday, March 10:

9:00	Review of additional work on handbook (if necessary)
10:00	Networking with affiliates and chapters **Scott Marshall**
10:30	Legislative and regulatory information resources
11:00	Coffee break
11:15	Techniques of grassroots advocacy **Alan Dinsmore**
11:45	Replication of training seminar
12:00	Evaluation of seminar
12:30	Adjournment

AMERICAN FO[illegible] BLIND
15 [illegible]
NEW YORK, NY 10011

VII. Looking to the Coming Decade: Future Challenges and Needs

Goals

Although proud of its past accomplishments, the GRD must now meet its responsibilities in a new economic and political environment. As competition for limited federal dollars increases, the role of the AFB Governmental Relations Department as government's primary source of information concerning blindness and visual impairment becomes even more critical. In order to more effectively meet its mission, the GRD must continue to explore and finance new communications alternatives which will enable us to better transmit information to and from policymakers. As techniques of advocacy become more sophisticated, our staff will be called upon to develop innovative training methods in multiple media designed to empower people in the governmental process.

Since it is expected that state governments will be assuming a greater role in the delivery of social services, the GRD'S monitoring, dissemination, and advocacy efforts will need to expand on the state level. This will undoubtedly require the commitment of both additional staff and resources.

Although much progress has been made to date, many issues will continue to challenge us during the remainder of this century and beyond. Education, employment, civil rights, health care, housing, and economic security--these issues affect all Americans and will be the subject of debate and policy development in the years ahead. The GRD staff will make sure that the interests of blind and visually impaired persons will be aggressively represented at all levels of government as our society addresses these and other important issues of the day.

In addition to the unfinished business of the first session of the 101st Congress, we hope to address the following issues as short and long term goals when Congress reconvenes in January:

- Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 including, but not limited to, improvements in, and additional funding for, the Title VII Part C program of independent living services for older blind Americans.

- Strive to secure coverage of orientation and mobility/independent living services under Medicare and Medicaid programs.

- Obtain improvements in personnel training programs including programs for the training of teachers of the visually handicapped and rehabilitation teachers.

- Obtain increases in the amount of earnings of blind Social Security Disability Insurance beneficiaries, as part of an overall effort to eliminate work disincentives.

- Seek clarification in the meaning of the term "least restrictive environment" as it relates to the education of blind children. This is important to insure that blind children will be educated in an environment which is best suited to their unique individual needs.

- Advocate for the creation of a commission to study and recommend solutions relative to the education needs of blind persons.

- Oppose changes to the Unrelated Business Income Tax provisions under the internal revenue code. This is of particular significance to private agencies for the blind whose resources should be spent on services to blind persons rather than on the payment of UBIT tax liability.

HV1791 Dunlap, Jerry.
D921 Presenting the
G747 Governmental Relations
Dept.

	DATE DUE		

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND
15 WEST 16th STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10011

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